



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Consultation Response Questionnaire

In order to meet the statutory deadline for submitting the revised Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission, responses must be received no later than **Friday 14 October 2011**.

Background

Under the powers granted by Schedule 9 3 (1) b of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) have called for the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to produce a revised Equality Scheme to replace the current scheme published in March 2001.

An Equality Scheme is a document which outlines a Public Authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. It must include an outline of the arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services. The attached Equality Scheme closely follows the template issued by ECNI on 1 November 2010.

Purpose

The questionnaire seeks your views on the Equality Scheme. It is important to note that this relates solely to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission and its functions.

The consultation questionnaire

The questionnaire can be completed by individual stakeholders, members of the public, or it can be completed on behalf of a group or organisation.

Consultation – Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Equality Scheme

Your Details

Name	
Job Title	
Organisation	
Address	
Telephone	
e-mail	

1. May we contact you should clarification be required on you response?

Yes / No (*delete as appropriate*)

2. The purpose of this Equality Scheme is to outline the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission’s arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. It includes an outline of the arrangements to carry out consultations; screenings (and where appropriate equality impact assessments); monitoring; training; and ensuring access to information and services.

Please provide details of anything that you consider missing or which would help to make clearer the arrangements for:

- (a) Carrying out consultations.

- (b) Carrying out screenings and equality impact assessments.

(c) Monitoring.

(d) Training.

(e) Ensuring access to information and services.

3. If there are any other measures which could be included within the Equality Scheme that would better promote good relations please provide details.

4. Do you have any other general comments on the draft Equality Scheme?

Note: it would be helpful if commenting on specific items within the draft Equality Scheme to quote the particular paragraph number(s).

Please send your response to:

The Acting Equality Manager
Commission and Corporate Support Unit
Room 152
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Email: equality@niassembly.co.uk

Web: www.niassembly.gov.uk

Tel: 028 90418377

Textphone: 028 90521209

Please note: Responses to this consultation will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which gives the right of access to the information held by public authorities. Before you submit your response, please read Appendix 1 about the effect of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on the confidentiality of responses to public consultation exercises.

Appendix 1

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Confidentiality of Consultations

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (Assembly Commission) will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Assembly Commission can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Assembly Commission in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Assembly Commission cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Assembly Commission should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Assembly Commission's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Assembly Commission should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Assembly Commission of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see web site at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>).

